CIA Seeks To Rally Its Agents

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BONN—The Tuesday night slaying of Richard S. Welch, CIA station chief in Athens, came as the agency's headquarters in Washington was secretely trying to boost the sagging morale of its overseas corps of agents.

The gunning down of Welch outside his Athens home by as yet unknown assailants will make that morale rebuilding job even tougher. Welch was murdered after his name appeared in an Athens newspaper list of alleged CIA agents.

There have been reports in Europe in recent days that the CIA headquarters has been arranging a special meeting of its key overseas people to be held soon in Brussels.

The reports, which have not been officially confirmed, began circulating when it became known that Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, the CIA deputy director, made unpublicized visits to a number of European countries, including Switzerland and West Germany.

Walters' trip is known to have involved attempts to boost the morale of agency personnel. The CIA has been rocked by almost a solid year of charges of misdeeds.

News agencies reported from Athens:

Greek security authorities reinforced guards outside the U.S. and Soviet embassies and police have been assigned to guard the homes of Americans named in the Athens press as CIA agents. Police also were assigned to protect 10 Soviet personnel here who have been listed as KGB agents.

Meanwhile, the publisher of the Athens Daily News, the newspaper which printed the names of alleged CIA agents, went to the police yesterday and offered to help them with their inquiries.

The Greek press said yesterday that the motives for Welch's assassination were obscure.

The pro-government newspaper Kathimerini and the opposition daily To Vima claimed that the killing might be a case of settling old scores between agents of foreign secret services.

Kathimerini, which often reflects the views of the Greek government, stressed the professionalism of the assassins, who vanished immediately after the shooting.

To Vima said that the assassins had a well-organized plan and were familiar with the movements of their victim.

Kathimerini also noted that the slaying coincided with a visit to Athens by James Potts, the CIA station chief here during Greece's seven-year military dictatorship. According to the newspaper, Potts had been seen in the Greek capital three days before Welch was murdered.